United Nations E/2005/64

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
17 May 2005
English
Original: French

Resumed organizational session for 2005
19 May 2005
Item 2 of the provisional agenda
Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Application of an intergovernmental organization for observer status with the Economic and Social Council

Letter dated 19 April 2005 from the President of the Union Economique et Monetaire Ouest Africaine to the President of the Economic and Social Council

The West African Economic and Monetary Union (UEMOA) was established by a Treaty signed in Dakar on 10 January 1994 by the Heads of State and Government of the seven West African countries that share the use of a common currency, the CFA franc. Those countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, the Niger, Senegal and Togo. The Treaty came into force on 1 August 1994, after it had been ratified by the member States. On 2 May 1997, Guinea-Bissau became the eighth State to join the Union.

UEMOA comprises eight member States which have a total surface area of 3,509,610 square kilometres. In 2004, the total population of the Union was estimated at 74 million of which approximately 52 per cent were women.

The Union's objectives are to:

- Enhance the economic and financial competitiveness of member States within the context of an open and competitive marketplace and a streamlined and harmonized legal framework;
- Achieve economic performance and policy convergence among member States through the institution of a multilateral monitoring procedure;
- Create among the member States a common market based on the free movement of persons, goods, services, capital and the right of establishment of self-employed or employed persons as well as on a common external tariff and common trading policy;
- Coordinate national sectoral policies by pursuing joint action and possible common policies in the following areas: human resources, physical planning,

05-34787 (E) 180505 180505

agriculture, energy, industry, mining, transport, infrastructure and telecommunications;

- Harmonize, to the extent required for the smooth operation of the common market, the national laws of the member States, more particularly, their tax laws.

With regard to economic and social rights, article 3 of the UEMOA Treaty stipulates that the Union shall act in consonance with the fundamental rights set forth in the 1948 Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the 1981 African Charter of Human and Peoples' Rights.

In terms of national sectoral policies, the following areas are already covered: higher education, vocational training, women's empowerment, health, community physical planning, transport and telecommunications, environment, agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, energy, mining, crafts, industry, culture and new technologies.

The UEMOA Commission budget which stood at CFAF 2,500 million in 1996 (or US$ 5,073,552.34) has grown over the past decade to CFAF 50,135,423,081 (or US$ 101,757,217.07) in 2005.

The operating organs of UEMOA are: the Conference of Heads of State and Government, the Council of Ministers, the Commission, the Parliament, the Court of Justice and the Cour des Comptes.

Advisory organs ("Chambre Consulaire Regionale") and such autonomous specialized agencies as the Central Bank of West African States (BCEAO) and the West African Development Bank (BOAD) also help to further the objectives of the Union.

Since the Economic and Social Council is active in the economic, social, cultural, educational and similar fields, UEMOA, as a subregional, like-minded organization, could contribute, within the limits of its resources, to the work of the Council.

Within 10 years, the track record of substantive and lasting achievements of the subregional economic integration space of UEMOA include:

- the establishment, in January 2000, of a customs union reflected in the total elimination of customs duties among members and the institution of a common external tariff which has helped to intensify intra-community trade;
- the multilateral arrangement put in place to monitor macroeconomic performance and policy convergence and which is reflected in the coordination and evaluation of national policies;
- the monograph on national labour and urban informal sector characteristics in member States;
- the harmonization of national accounts among member States;
- the entry into force, in 1998, of a common UEMOA accounting framework termed the West African Accounting System (SYSCOA);
- the institution of a harmonized consumer price index;

- the training of staff on gender perspectives in the preparation of UEMOA plans and policies;

- the formulation of policies common to the eight member States in the agricultural, mining, industrial, women's empowerment and other sectors;

- the implementation of an annual fellowship programme third-cycle (graduate) professional training and support of research fellows.

In 2005, a wide range of programme activities will begin to be implemented, including:

- networking of businesswomen operating in entrepreneurship, trade, agriculture and crafts in order to build their institutional, financial and decision-making capacity;

- forging of various partnerships in order to speed up the female school enrolment by 2015;

- finalization of a study on higher education and the launching of vast reforms in the sector;

- publication of a women's information bulletin to increase awareness and dissemination of information on women in all walks of life;

- UEMOA quality control programme consisting of the establishment of a system for certification, standardization and control of quality within UEMOA;

- establishment of a regional economic programme for the period 2004-2008 which takes into account the Millennium Development Goals and the priorities of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and aims, among other things, at developing industrial activities through the integration of electricity grids, the development and processing of natural resources and the rehabilitation and modernization of transport facilities; and

- operationalization of the regional solidarity bank set up to combat poverty.

Over the past 10 years, UEMOA has established multilateral and bilateral relations and forged partnerships with various institutions including the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and its Africa Technical Assistance Centre (AFRITAC) for West Africa, the European Union, and the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF), the *Observatoire economique et statistique d'Afrique subsaharienne* (AFRISTAT), the *Cooperation francaise*, the African Development Bank (ADB), the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), the African Union (AU), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United States Department of the Treasury.

Through the Commission, which is its executing and lead agency, UEMOA is hereby requesting observer status with the Council so that it can contribute to the building of a more equitable world.

Enclosed please find, for your convenience, a copy of the UEMOA Treaty and some background documents which I hope you will find informative.*

I remain available to provide any additional information you may deem necessary.

(*Signed*) Soumaila **Cisse**
Chairman of the Commission

* The documents referred to are deposited with the secretariat of the Economic and Social Council and can be examined by member States upon request.